



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS
Washington, D.C. 20231
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/692,470	10/20/2000	Shinji Yamamoto		6675

7590 06/07/2002

Richard L Schwaab
Foley & Lardner Washington Harbour
PO Box 25696
3000 K St NW Ste 500
Washington, DC 20007-8696

[REDACTED] EXAMINER

NGUYEN, TU MINH

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3748	

DATE MAILED: 06/07/2002

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/692,470	Applicant(s) Yamamoto et al.
	Examiner Tu M. Nguyen	Art Unit 3748
<i>-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --</i>		
Period for Reply A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE <u>3</u> MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.		
- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136 (a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication. - If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely. - If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication. - Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). - Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).		
Status		
1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Responsive to communication(s) filed on <u>Jan 11, 2002</u>		
2a) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This action is FINAL . 2b) <input type="checkbox"/> This action is non-final.		
3) <input type="checkbox"/> Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under <i>Ex parte Quayle</i> , 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.		
Disposition of Claims		
4) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Claim(s) <u>1, 2, 4-10, and 12-36</u> is/are pending in the application.		
4a) Of the above, claim(s) <u>7-10 and 12-14</u> is/are withdrawn from consideration.		
5) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Claim(s) <u>19-22</u> is/are allowed.		
6) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Claim(s) <u>1, 2, 4-6, 15-18, 23-33, 35, and 36</u> is/are rejected.		
7) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Claim(s) <u>34</u> is/are objected to.		
8) <input type="checkbox"/> Claims _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.		
Application Papers		
9) <input type="checkbox"/> The specification is objected to by the Examiner.		
10) <input type="checkbox"/> The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are a) <input type="checkbox"/> accepted or b) <input type="checkbox"/> objected to by the Examiner. Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).		
11) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The proposed drawing correction filed on <u>Jan 3, 2002</u> is: a) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> approved b) <input type="checkbox"/> disapproved by the Examiner. If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.		
12) <input type="checkbox"/> The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.		
Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120		
13) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f). a) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All b) <input type="checkbox"/> Some* c) <input type="checkbox"/> None of: 1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certified copies of the priority documents have been received. 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____. 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)). *See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.		
14) <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e). a) <input type="checkbox"/> The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.		
15) <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.		
Attachment(s)		
1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)		
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)		
3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s). _____		
4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____		
5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)		
6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		

Art Unit: 3748

DETAILED ACTION

1. An Applicant's Amendment filed on January 3, 2002 has been entered.

Claims 3 and 11 have been canceled. Claims 1, 4-7, 13, 16, 19, 28, and 29 have been amended. Claims 30-36 have been added. Overall, claims 1, 2, 4-10, and 12-36 are pending in this application.

2. In the response to the restriction requirement mailed on January 11, 2002, applicant elected the species of Figure 2 with traverse. Claims 4-6, 15-23, 31-36 are readable on the species of Figure 2. Claims 1, 2, and 24-30 are generic. Thus, claims 1, 2, 4-6, and 15-36 will be examined in its full merit. Claims 7-10 and 12-14 are withdrawn from further consideration by the examiner, 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

Applicant's election with traverse of the species of Figure 2 in Paper No. 10 is acknowledged. The traversal is on the ground(s) that the Office Action has not correctly characterized the species of Figures 2, 3, and 4. This is not found persuasive because in the restriction requirement, the examiner has clearly stated and defined the major difference between the two species of the claimed invention. The two species are clearly distinct and would require a separate search area for each species and thus, impose a burden in search and examination.

The requirement is still deemed proper and is therefore made FINAL.

Art Unit: 3748

Drawings

3. The amended drawings filed on January 3, 2002 have been approved for entry. Upon allowance of the pending application, formal drawings with the approved changes must be submitted.

Claim Objections

4. Claims 33 and 34 are objected to because of the following informalities:

- Claim 33, line 2 from the bottom of the claim, "catalyst" should read --device--.
- Claim 34, lines 2, 4, and 5 of the claim, "catalyst" should read --device--.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office Action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless --

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

6. Claims 1, 2, and 26-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Oshima et al. (U.S. Patent 5,412,946).

Re claims 1 and 28-30, as shown in Figure 9, Oshima et al. disclose an exhaust gas purifying system and an exhaust gas purifying method of a multiple step control type in

Art Unit: 3748

combination with an internal combustion engine (119) having an exhaust gas passageway, the engine includes a combustion system having a combustion control device (the ECU is shown in Figure 1) for controlling at least one selected from the group consisting of operating parameters of the engine and combinations of the operating parameters, the operating parameters including fuel injection timing, spark timing, opening and closing timings of intake and exhaust valves of the engine. The exhaust gas purifying system includes:

- a NOx treating catalyst (12) for reducing NOx disposed in the exhaust gas passageway to reduce NOx in presence of reducing components in exhaust gas, and

- a hydrogen enriching device (120, 9) disposed upstream of the NOx treating catalyst with respect to flow of exhaust gas and including a device (120) arranged to increase a ratio of hydrogen to total reducing components in a combustion gas so as to relations represented by the following formulae (1) and (2), when reduction of NOx is carried out by the NOx treating catalyst:

$$[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_d > [\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_u \quad (1)$$

$$[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_d \geq 0.3 \quad (2)$$

where $[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_u$ is a ratio between a concentration $[\text{H}_2]_u$ of hydrogen and a concentration $[\text{TR}]_u$ of total reducing components in exhaust gas in the exhaust gas passageway upstream of the hydrogen enriching device; and $[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_d$ is a ratio between a concentration $[\text{H}_2]_d$ of hydrogen and a concentration $[\text{TR}]_d$ of total reducing components in exhaust gas in the exhaust gas passageway upstream of the NOx treating catalyst and downstream of the hydrogen enriching device,

Art Unit: 3748

wherein the hydrogen enriching device is a device (9) for decreasing the reducing components (HC or carbon monoxide) other than hydrogen in the exhaust gas or a device (120) for producing hydrogen out of a combustion gas,

In the above formula (1), $[H_2 / TR]_u$ is approximately zero as only a trace amount of hydrogen is produced from the combustion engine. $[H_2 / TR]_d$ is equal to the ratio of $\{[H_2]_u + [H_2]\}$ and $\{[TR]_u + [TR]\}$, where $[H_2]$ and $[TR]$ are the concentration of hydrogen and total reducing components from the hydrogen enrichment device, respectively. Per molar basis, $[H_2]_u$ is approximately zero; and with the second chemical reaction in column 4, $[H_2]$ and $[TR]$ are 1 and 2, respectively. Therefore, $[H_2 / TR]_d$ is equal to $1/\{2+[TR]_u\}$ which is clearly greater than zero. Thus, formula (1) is inherently satisfied when the hydrogen enrichment device is active and producing a mixture containing hydrogen in accordance to the second chemical reaction in column 4. In formula (2), as shown earlier, $[H_2 / TR]_d = 1/\{2+[TR]_u\}$ and is greater than or equal to 0.3 only if $[TR]_u$ is less than 1.33 mole. It is hereby argued that $[TR]_u$ is negligible as the exhaust gas must pass through the oxidizing catalyst (9) where a majority amount of HC and CO is oxidized. Hence, formula (2) is inherently satisfied when the hydrogen enrichment device is active and producing a mixture containing hydrogen in accordance to the second chemical reaction in column 4 and when there exists an oxidizing catalyst (9) located upstream of the NO_x treating catalyst (12).

Re claim 2, in the exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the hydrogen enriching device is arranged to increase a ratio of hydrogen to carbon monoxide in the total reducing

Art Unit: 3748

components in exhaust gas so as to meet a relation represented by the following formula $[H_2 / CO]_d > 1$ where $[H_2 / CO]_d$ is a ratio between a concentration $[H_2]_d$ of hydrogen and a concentration $[CO]_d$ of carbon monoxide in the total reducing components in exhaust gas in the exhaust gas passageway immediately upstream of the NO_x treating catalyst and downstream of the hydrogen enriching device, when reduction of NO_x is carried out by the NO_x treating catalyst. In the device shown in Figure 9, as discussed above, $[H_2]_u$ and $[CO]_u$ of the exhaust gas passing through the oxidizing catalyst (9) are approximately zero. Thus, $[H_2 / CO]_d$ is simply equal to $[H_2 / CO]$ of the hydrogen enrichment device; and $[H_2 / CO]_d$ is clearly greater than or equal to one when the hydrogen enrichment device is active and producing a mixture containing hydrogen in accordance to the second chemical reaction in column 4 and when there exists an oxidizing catalyst (9) located upstream of the NO_x treating catalyst (12).

Re claim 26, the combustion device in the exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al. is an internal combustion engine.

Re claim 27, the internal combustion engine in the exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al. is a gasoline-fueled engine for an automotive vehicle (see Figure 6 and lines 53-56 of column 6).

Re claim 31, in the exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the hydrogen enriching device is a device (9) for suppressing consumption of hydrogen in exhaust gas.

Art Unit: 3748

Re claim 32, in the exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the hydrogen enriching device is a device (9) for decreasing the reducing components (HC or CO) other than hydrogen in the exhaust gas.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office Action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 4, 18, and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oshima et al. as applied to claim 1 above, in view of Bartley (U.S. Patent 6,244,044).

Re claim 4, the system of Oshima et al. cited above comprises a combustion control device, (7) in Figure 1, for controlling the operating parameters of an internal combustion engine, the operating parameters including fuel injection timing, spark timing, opening and closing timings of intake and exhaust valves of the internal combustion engine. Oshima et al., however, fail to disclose that the hydrogen enrichment device is a device for producing hydrogen in the exhaust gas, that includes a hydrogen producing catalyst containing at least one noble metal.

Bartley teaches a method for reducing cold-start hydrocarbon emissions, that utilizes a hydrogen producing catalyst (16) containing rhodium for the production hydrogen in the exhaust

Art Unit: 3748

gas during a fuel rich operation (see the Abstract and lines 17-20 of column 4). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made, to have utilized the catalyst taught by Bartley in the system of Oshima et al., since the use thereof would have provided an effective means to provide hydrogen gas for the effective reduction of NOx emissions at the NOx treating catalyst.

Re claim 18, in the modified exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the hydrogen producing catalyst has a function to produce hydrogen from HC and CO in the exhaust gas.

Re claim 23, the modified exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al. further comprising a device (fuel injector) for controlling exhaust gas a position upstream of the hydrogen producing catalyst to intermittently have a composition in which air-fuel ratio is rich, so as to raise efficiency of production of hydrogen by the hydrogen producing catalyst.

9. Claims 5 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oshima et al. as applied to claim 1 above, in view of Bartley and Kumar et al. (U.S. Patent 6,151,547).

Re claim 5, the exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al. discloses the invention as cited above, however, fails to disclose that the hydrogen enrichment device is a device for decreasing the reducing components other than hydrogen in the exhaust gas; the device includes a CO and HC selective oxidation catalyst containing zirconium oxide, for selectively oxidize CO and HC.

Bartley teaches a method for reducing cold-start hydrocarbon emissions, that utilizes a hydrogen producing catalyst (16) containing rhodium for the production hydrogen from the

Art Unit: 3748

oxidizing of CO and HC in the exhaust gas during a fuel rich operation (see the Abstract and lines 17-20 of column 4). Bartley, however, fails to disclose that the catalyst (16) contains zirconium oxide as a stabilizer.

Kumar et al. teach that it is conventional in the art to utilize zirconium oxide as a stabilizer in a catalytic converter (lines 5-12 of column 16).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made, to have utilized the catalyst taught by Bartley and Kumar et al. in the system of Oshima et al., since the use thereof would have provided an effective means to reduce the concentration of HC and CO in the exhaust gas so that the light-off temperature to reduce NOx in the NOx treating catalyst can be lowered.

Re claim 15, in the modified exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the CO and HC selective oxidation catalyst has a function of producing hydrogen and contains rhodium and zirconium oxide, the zirconium oxide containing alkaline earth metal and having a composition represented by the following general formula (3):



where X is an alkaline earth metal selected from the group consisting of magnesium, calcium, strontium and barium (Kumar et al.: lines 41-48 of column 15 and lines 5-12 of column 16); a and b are ratios of atoms of elements, and c is a number of oxygen atoms required for satisfying valences of X and Zr, in which a is within a range of from 0.01 to 0.5, b is within a range of from 0.5 to 0.99, and a+b= 1.0.

Art Unit: 3748

10. Claim 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oshima et al. in view of Bartley and Kumar et al. as applied to claim 15 above, and further in view of design choice.

In the modified exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the CO and HC selective oxidation catalyst further contains palladium and cerium oxide (line 65 of column 16 to line 39 of column 17). Oshima et al., however, fail to disclose that the palladium is carried in an amount ranging from 20 to 80% by weight of total palladium on cerium oxide.

With regard to applicants claim directed to a specified percentage amount of the total palladium on cerium oxide, the specification of such would have been an obvious matter of design choice well within the level of ordinary skill in the art depending on design variables, such as the amount of cerium oxide, cost and availability of palladium, operating environment of the catalyst, etc. Moreover, there is nothing in the record which establishes that the specification of such presents a novel of unexpected result (See *In re Kuhle*, 526 F.2d 553, 188 USPQ 7 (CCPA 1975)).

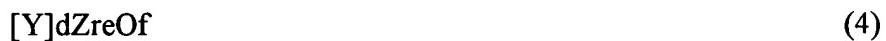
11. Claims 6 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oshima et al. as applied to claim 1 above, in view of Kobayashi et al. (U.S. Patent 5,124,303) and Tauster et al. (U.S. Patent 4,149,998).

Re claim 6, the exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al. discloses the invention as cited above, however, fails to disclose that the hydrogen enrichment device is a device for suppressing consumption of hydrogen in at least one of combustion gas and exhaust gas; and that the device is a catalyst containing solid acidic zirconium oxide.

Art Unit: 3748

Kobayashi et al. teach a catalyst for treatment of waste gas, that contains solid acidic zirconium oxide. Tauster et al. teach that catalysts that contain an oxide of zirconium is known to suppress the chemisorption of hydrogen (see the Abstract). Therefore, the catalyst in Kobayashi et al. can suppress the consumption of hydrogen in the exhaust gas. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made, to have utilized the catalyst taught by Kobayashi et al. and Tauster et al., in the system of Oshima et al., since the use thereof would have provided an effective system to remove harmful emissions in the exhaust gas of internal combustion engines.

Re claim 17, in the modified exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the catalyst containing solid acidic zirconium oxide contains platinum, the solid acidic zirconium oxide containing at least one element selected from the group consisting of titanium, aluminum tungsten, molybdenum and zinc, the solid acidic zirconium oxide having a composition represented by the following general formula (4):



where Y is at least one element selected from the group consisting of titanium, aluminum, tungsten, molybdenum and zinc; d and e are ratios of atoms of elements; and f is a number of oxygen atoms required for satisfying valences of Y and Zr, in which d is within a range of from 0.01 to 0.5, e is within a range of from 0.5 to 0.99, and $d+e = 1.0$. See Example 3 in Kobayashi et al.

Art Unit: 3748

12. Claims 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oshima et al. as applied to claim 1 above, in view of Kaneko et al. (U.S. Patent 6,173,571).

Re claim 24, the NOx treating catalyst of Oshima et al. cited above contains platinum. Oshima et al., however, fail to disclose that the NOx treating catalyst also contains at least one substance selected from the group consisting of alumina, alkali metal and alkaline earth metal.

Kaneko et al. teach that it is conventional in the art to utilize a NOx treating catalyst containing at least one substance selected from the group consisting of alumina, alkali metal and alkaline earth metal (lines 10-16 of column 8). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made, to have utilized the NOx treating catalyst taught by Kaneko et al. in the system of Oshima et al., since the use thereof would have provided an effective NOx treating catalyst to purify exhaust gas from internal combustion engines.

Re claim 25, in the exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the NOx treating catalyst contains at least rhodium (Kaneko et al.: lines 10-16 of column 8) and arranged to be capable of reducing NOx in exhaust gas at a temperature ranging from 260 to 380°C (Oshima et al.: curve B in Figure 19).

13. Claims 33, 35, and 36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oshima et al. in view of Gale et al. (U.S. Patent 5,297,515).

Re claims 33 and 35, as shown in Figure 9, Oshima et al. disclose an exhaust gas purifying system, comprising:

Art Unit: 3748

- a NOx treating catalyst (12) for reducing NOx disposed in the exhaust gas passageway to reduce NOx in presence of reducing components in exhaust gas, and

- a hydrogen enriching device (120, 9) disposed upstream of the NOx treating catalyst with respect to flow of exhaust gas and including a device (120) arranged to increase a ratio of hydrogen to total reducing components in a combustion gas so as to relations represented by the following formulae (1) and (2), when reduction of NOx is carried out by the NOx treating catalyst:

$$[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_d > [\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_u \quad (1)$$

$$[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_d \geq 0.3 \quad (2)$$

where $[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_u$ is a ratio between a concentration $[\text{H}_2]_u$ of hydrogen and a concentration $[\text{TR}]_u$ of total reducing components in exhaust gas in the exhaust gas passageway upstream of the hydrogen enriching device; and $[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_d$ is a ratio between a concentration $[\text{H}_2]_d$ of hydrogen and a concentration $[\text{TR}]_d$ of total reducing components in exhaust gas in the exhaust gas passageway upstream of the NOx treating catalyst and downstream of the hydrogen enriching device,

In formula (1), $[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_u$ is approximately zero as only a trace amount of hydrogen is produced from the combustion engine. $[\text{H}_2 / \text{TR}]_d$ is equal to the ratio of $\{[\text{H}_2]_u + [\text{H}_2]\}$ and $\{[\text{TR}]_u + [\text{TR}]\}$, where $[\text{H}_2]$ and $[\text{TR}]$ are the concentration of hydrogen and total reducing components from the hydrogen enrichment device, respectively. Per molar basis, $[\text{H}_2]_u$ is approximately zero; and with the second chemical reaction in column 4, $[\text{H}_2]$ and $[\text{TR}]$ are 1 and

Art Unit: 3748

2, respectively. Therefore, $[H_2 / TR]d$ is equal to $1/\{2+[TR]u\}$ which is clearly greater than zero. Thus, formula (1) is inherently satisfied when the hydrogen enrichment device is active and producing a mixture containing hydrogen in accordance to the second chemical reaction in column 4. In formula (2), as shown earlier, $[H_2 / TR]d = 1/\{2+[TR]u\}$ and is greater than or equal to 0.3 only if $[TR]u$ is less than 1.33 mole. It is hereby argued that $[TR]u$ is negligible as the exhaust gas must pass through the oxidizing catalyst (9) where a majority amount of HC and CO is oxidized. Hence, formula (2) is inherently satisfied when the hydrogen enrichment device is active and producing a mixture containing hydrogen in accordance to the second chemical reaction in column 4 and when there exists an oxidizing catalyst (9) located upstream of the NOx treating catalyst (12).

Oshima et al., however, fail to disclose that the hydrogen producing device produces hydrogen from HC and CO in at least one of combustion gas and exhaust gas; and that both the NOx treating catalyst and the hydrogen enriching device are disposed in the exhaust passageway and wherein exhaust gas passes through the hydrogen enriching device.

As illustrated in Figure 1, Gale et al. teach fuel supply system for engines, comprising a hydrogen producing device (40) disposed in the exhaust passageway (36) to produce hydrogen from HC and CO in the exhaust gas. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made, to have utilized the hydrogen producing device taught by Gale et al. in the system of Oshima et al., since the use thereof would have provided a means to produce hydrogen gas for the efficient reduction of NOx in the exhaust gas.

Art Unit: 3748

Re claim 36, in the modified exhaust gas purifying system of Oshima et al., the hydrogen enriching device (9) is arranged to increase a ratio of hydrogen to carbon monoxide in the total reducing components in exhaust gas so as to meet a relation represented by the following formula $[H_2 / CO]d > 1$ where $[H_2 / CO]d$ is a ratio between a concentration $[H_2]d$ of hydrogen and a concentration $[CO]d$ of carbon monoxide in the total reducing components in exhaust gas in the exhaust gas passageway immediately upstream of the NOx treating catalyst (12) and downstream of the hydrogen enriching device (9), when reduction of NOx is carried out by the NOx treating catalyst (this is obvious because the hydrogen enriching device (9) oxidizes the CO in the exhaust gas and thus, the concentration of CO is nearly zero at a location upstream of the NOx treating catalyst and downstream of the hydrogen enriching device).

Allowable Subject Matter

14. Claims 19-22 are allowed.

Claim 34 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Art Unit: 3748

Response to Applicants Arguments

15. Applicant's arguments with respect to the reference of Oshima et al. applied in the previous Office Action have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Re claims 1, 28, and 29, in response to applicant's argument that Oshima et al. fail to disclose the limitation of "wherein said hydrogen enriching device includes a device for decreasing the reducing components other than hydrogen in at least one of combustion gas and exhaust gas" (pages 15 and 16 of Applicant's Amendment), the examiner respectfully disagrees. As clearly shown in Figure 9, Oshima et al. disclose the use of an oxidizing catalyst (9) to decrease the concentrations of HC and CO in the exhaust gas.

Re claim 30, in response to applicant's argument that Oshima et al. fail to disclose the limitation of "wherein said hydrogen enriching device produces hydrogen out of at least one of combustion gas and exhaust gas" (page 17 of Applicant's Amendment), the examiner again respectfully disagrees. As clearly shown in Figure 9, Oshima et al. disclose the use of a hydrogen enrich device (120) to produce hydrogen out of a combustion gas. The partial oxidization process of a mixture of natural gas and air inside the reforming catalyst (120) is also considered as a combustion process which generates a combustion gas.

Art Unit: 3748

Conclusion

16. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Prior Art

17. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure and consists of two patents.

- Schweibold et al. (U.S. Patent 3,908,365) disclose a treatment of gaseous effluent.
- Tengblad et al. (U.S. Patent 5,867,982) disclose a system for reducing emissions in catalyst exhaust systems using hydrogen to provide a short light-off time for the catalyst.

Art Unit: 3748

Communication

18. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Examiner Tu Nguyen whose telephone number is (703) 308-2833.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mr. Thomas E. Denion, can be reached on (703) 308-2623. The fax phone number for this group is (703) 308-7763.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-1148.

Tu M. Nguyen

TMN

Tu M. Nguyen

June 3, 2002

Patent Examiner

Art Unit 3748

TD
THOMAS DENION
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3700